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ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural competence is a recent movement with important implications for foreign language teaching, schools of business and economics, and firms engaged in either international or national commerce. Until now, it has not been adequately addressed. Higher education must investigate strategies for more effective integration of culture into the language and communicative components of the curriculum for international business and economics. In addition, students should be made aware of the growing phenomenon of globalization and world interdependence and the need for cross-cultural competence for improved international relations. The ethnocentrism predominant in American culture must be addressed as an obstacle to cross-cultural competence. Materials and curricula that challenge cultural assumptions can be presented in separate courses or integrated into subject-area courses in marketing, management, or labor relations. Closer cooperation between foreign language departments and schools of business and economics must receive high priority. In fact, the whole educational system must be restructured to react more quickly and appropriately to the constantly changing competitive world environment. Cross-cultural competence has both pragmatic and humanistic consequences for individual and world cultures. (MSE)

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CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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ENVIRONMENTS:

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Paper read at Foreign Language and International Business
Conference at Eastern Michigan University at Ypsilanti,
April, 1990

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Introduction

If one considers the rather long history of foreign language teaching in this country, the recognition of the vital importance of integrating culture with the linguistic component has been rather recent. Before the decade of the 60's, the study of foreign languages had always been seen as merely a vehicle in order to make the literature of the target language more accessible to the student. In the early 1960's came the audio-lingual revolution and theorists and practitioners began to focus on the language for its own sake and on its communicative dimension. The importance of culture was only obliquely considered since at that time everyone was so excited about being able to speak and listen to the language after so many sterile decades of passively studying the isolated grammar constructions and the decoding of passages from "great literature" under the

delusion that they were actually translating them. In the 70's, the foreign language people finally began to focus seriously on the role that culture ought to play in the learning of a foreign language and suddenly there was a whole burst of papers and conferences that had the teaching of culture as its central focus. Social and behavioral scientist had already been seriously researching the link between culture and human communication for many years, but most language people seldom stray outside their discipline and therefore failed to take maximum advantage of the rather copious material available to them that could have advanced their work significantly. Then, along came the decade of the 80's and the ACTFL guidelines (2) appeared on the scene and seized the attention of the profession. Once again the communicative aspect of language took to the forefront and practitioners, theorists and textbook writers and publishers were singing the praise of competency based instruction and enthusiastically proclaiming it as the new panacea for a foreign language program that, in our educational system, had never really gotten off the ground. The architects of this new approach assured us that effective guidelines for testing cultural proficiency would be forthcoming and would complement the communicative syllabus that was already in place. The good news was that the enormous importance of cultural content in a foreign language was a decisive part of the movement unlike the earlier audio-lingual approach. The fact that these guidelines have yet to appear is more a function of the overwhelming complexity of the subject rather than the lack of

commitment on the part of the supporters of this new approach. One of the objectives of this paper is to suggest that research into a culture's business and behavior practices may indeed be that sector which could be the most manageable and the one most able to be broken down into meaningful units so as to be able to integrate them into the linguistic and communicative components of the foreign language sequence. Cross-cultural competency is a variation of a relatively new topic of research and has only been marginally treated in business school curriculums and is practically non-existent in departments of foreign languages. This paper urges greater study of this area and its increased application in business schools and foreign language programs. Readers interested in a good overview of the evolution of foreign language methodology in the United States and an insightful view of their good and bad implications are directed to Grittner (13). All of these movements greatly contributed to the improvement of foreign language teaching in the U.S. It can be safely said that, although few people would be completely satisfied with the state of the profession today, more progress has been made in the last 30 years than at any other time in the history of foreign language teaching and learning in our country. Obviously, there is still a long way to go. Nevertheless, the major thrust of this paper is to entreat the consideration of different approaches or strategies toward attaining a more effective integration of culture into the language and communicative components of the syllabi. At the same time we should expend every effort in order to make students more aware of the

phenomenon of globalization and world interdependence that is accelerating exponentially and to make them more conscious of cross-cultural proficiency and the part it can play in bringing about more productive and harmonious interaction among all nations and citizens of our planet. All of these strategies, although they will be instrumental in improving the teaching of foreign languages, also have a direct application for business school curriculums, to American business and, in particular, to the multi-national corporation. At the same time, the experiences of the MNC can provide the university with a whole body of cross-cultural case studies that can prove invaluable in the accumulation of a large body of relevant cultural material that can be incorporated into their teaching materials. We shall also suggest that greater interaction between foreign language departments and departments or schools of business and economics is needed. Cross-cultural competence is, of course, a vital area for both disciplines and one which can help make American business more effective in international commerce. The ethnocentrism that has always predominated in American culture must also be addressed since it is one more obstacle to be overcome on the road to cross-cultural proficiency. Nor can we ignore the vital role that our educational system plays in any topic that deals so crucially with our national and international destiny. All of these points will be addressed in this discussion. The role of the relationship between cross-cultural proficiency and international business is a rather recent field of analysis and there is not a copious amount of appropriate

literature available. Still, its possibilities in both the academic and business fields seem extremely worthy of continued study and reflection and there are some excellent resources available to those interested in pursuing the subject (Harris and Moran, 14).

Managing Cultural Complexity

It would indeed be presumptuous to address such an informed and experienced body of foreign language and business teachers and practitioners as if there were clear cut solutions to the problems that will be outlined. To a large degree, the study merely restates the tremendous complexities of foreign language and culture learning and the role it plays in a rapidly changing world where many of our most sacred assumptions are being challenged as to their legitimacy. We intend to reflect on these problems and to propose, what are hopefully, some of the right questions, the answers to which may guide us to more effective coordination of language and culture and instill in students, both of languages and of business, a greater awareness of and tolerance for cultural diversity. For those interested in a publication which serves as an excellent introduction to the whole field of the emerging field of cross-cultural communications, they are directed to Condon and Yousif (9).

As was suggested earlier, synthesizing an unwieldy, complex, far-flung, and hard to define phenomenon such as culture is a mind-boggling task and the fact that, up until now at least, it

has been unmanageable in any truly functional or pedagogical sense. For lack of any really satisfactory definition, for our purposes, we can describe it simply as the sum total of experiences of a given cultural community. One of the major blocs in working with this cumbersome mass is to be able to reduce it into workable units and then somehow graft them on to linguistic and communicative syllabi (Allen, 1). These, in turn, should be blended into the sequence of the foreign language programs and also be integrated into business school curriculum with one of the principle objectives being to make students in both areas more cross-culturally sensitive and competent in interacting with both national and international cultural diversity.

The absence of appropriate cultural materials is not due, of course, to a lack of awareness of their tremendous value nor is it due to the absence of energy and initiative on the part of people involved in foreign languages and business education. The term "culture" appears in many of the titles of foreign language textbooks and it is a stated goal in the prefaces of even more of them. Upon closer examination, however, we find that the culture sections, in the most part, are comprised of either a smorgasbord of disparate elements of the target language community or of quaint customs and disjointed historical or literary episodes with apparently no attempt to choose less superficial examples or to try to synthesize them into some kind of organic coherence. Admittedly, the selection and structuring of this kind of material is challenging but it is worth pursuing.

If we do perfect them, it will not only be useful in providing us greater insights into the people whose language we are studying, but by applying similar techniques to the study of other cultures we may be able to discover a set of generic skills which can be applied to the learning of any other culture or subculture. We can teach the students to learn "how to learn", that is master the skills and techniques, after they leave school, to become more competent in any culture. This in no way denigrates the notion that the language is the key element to enter into the psyche of the target culture and that it should be learned wherever possible. However, the present reality of the European Economic Community, for example, in which twelve sovereign nations with nine different national languages and perhaps some fifty or so regional languages and dialects of varying complexities, will become finalized in 1992, clearly demonstrates that programs which lead to cross-cultural competency are much more feasible than those which seek to only develop single linguistic proficiency. This learning "how to learn" should become one of the higher priorities in foreign language and business programs since graduates in these fields, more so than in others, are more likely to need to know how to function effectively in a whole host of foreign settings, to anyone of which they might be assigned. The benefits to schools of business and to international businesses themselves is obvious. Naturally, the resultant improvement in international harmony and stability, implicit in heightened cross-cultural sensitivity, would foster greater international economic health and social

harmony. Certainly goals at this level of transcendency, if really attainable, should give foreign language and business teachers a greater sense of mission.

We have chosen research into the experience of the multinational corporation as the framework upon which to build a more effective approach to the production of a set of coherent and reliable cultural materials. This strategy seems appropriate since the MNC has had to confront cultural differences in the same way as it has to confront any other challenge or obstacle to the achievement of its economic goals. Unlike the educational establishment, however, these obstacles have to be eliminated or minimized rather quickly since its very survival depends upon how quickly and adequately it reacts to them. By reducing this unwieldy and unmanageable culture to segments of business behavior and practices, two things are immediately accomplished. First, any danger of selecting superficial or capricious details of that culture is eliminated since a peoples very survival depends upon its economic activities. Secondly, when people are engaged in economic activities, their practices and behavior are more spontaneous and unconscious and therefore more natural and authentic, and thus they provide more reliable references. For this reason, it is quite logical to assume that this particular sector of the culture comes closer to being a microcosm of the total culture more so than any other single aspect of it. Due to this authenticity, it can be more easily related to other significant attitudes and behavior of people in their non-economic roles and at this point one can begin to both generalize

and synthesize the larger culture more effectively. At the same time, the sum of these cultural units will form an integrated whole that will become more easily grasped by students as they progress along their communicative sequences. This same cultural package could also be incorporated into the business school curriculum, and supply an element sorely lacking in most of them. In addition, it would be of incalculable value for the MNC who, although they have had to confront intercultural barriers, they have not, at least at this point of time, been able to completely resolve them. In short, it can have a tripartite positive result for foreign language departments, schools of business and economics, and international business as all three struggle to find workable solutions to the challenge of integrating meaningful cross-cultural approaches into their institutions. This cross-cultural proficiency can also improve the way we relate and interact with the sub-cultures within the larger status quo macro-culture. This is an area which has caused every nation untold conflict and bitterness and one that has impeded our country from reaching its full potential as a respected world power. Nor should we ignore the great advances in international understanding that would ultimately be an inescapable spin-off of the whole process. This may well be, in the long term, the most far-reaching accomplishment of them all.

The Business Confrontation with Cross-Cultural Competence

The rapid globalization of our planet and its consequential interdependence began in earnest after the Second World War and has expanded at a dizzying rate ever since. It does appear, upon serious examination of human history, that most, if not all, major historical movements have at their source economic phenomena. The process of globalization seems to be no exception to this rule since the creation and role of large multinational corporations, clearly an economic entity, are playing a large part in spear-heading this movement. It is interesting to note that since all MNCs stemmed from free market economies, one may conclude that a special feature of capitalism, unlike other kinds of economic systems, is that it continually seeks larger and larger markets and as a consequence company operations spill over into the international arena. There are a whole host of reasons for this: economies of scale, recycling mature products, research and development imperatives, control of sources of raw materials, or simply recognizing new opportunities in cross-border environments. At any rate, these forces push large companies, usually after having saturated their national markets, to expand into international markets. Many of these corporations would have gone bankrupt had they not chosen this alternative. This of course suggests that the globalization process, not unlike all other historical processes, is somehow being mandated by historical and economic forces that, in the main, lie outside conscious human domain. This opens up a whole other area of

intriguing speculation, which of course goes far beyond the limits of this discussion (Teilhard de Chardin, 19). Nevertheless, when these companies moved into foreign markets they immediately found that doing business in a foreign culture was quite different from the way they operated in their home markets and they soon learned that a clear and coherent understanding of the culture of their clients and employees was essential if they were to succeed. In some ways their dilemma is not that different from foreign language theorists and practitioners who are trying to identify significant cultural manifestations and integrate them coherently into their programs. Corporations, unlike academia, as was pointed out before, have to react immediately to problems and solve them. After many serious faux pas, many of which are now legendary: body by fisher, the coke generation, Nova cars etc. that bemused or alarmed a whole generation of foreign language and business conference participants. At any rate, they soon learned that marketing products and services in another land required a rather thorough knowledge of the cultural imperatives operating on the psyche of potential clients (Bloland, 5). Later, when they started to hire foreign nationals, they soon found that they would have to modify their management techniques, since American management styles and techniques often conflicted with culturally based assumptions in the host culture and proved counterproductive to the objectives and goals of the company. Then, when they had to deal with national and regional bureaucracies, they quickly learned that they had to adjust their negotiating techniques and styles

to the new cultural norms. Later, there were new currency regulations, labor laws, and national customs, and once again they had to adjust their policies and techniques from the way they had usually carried out their home business operations. All of these cross-cultural experiences, are in reality, extremely valuable applied cultural phenomena. They should be studied and accumulated in a systematic fashion. Although some of the material is available, it is not being utilized nearly enough by business schools and foreign language people who have, almost without exception, failed to realize its potential. All of this should be of paramount interest to those engaged in business education and foreign language learning.

Be that as it may, the corporations did start to do a better job in learning more about how to side-step the cultural pitfalls in the foreign country and were, to one degree or another, marginally successful. I say marginally because only the larger corporations, because of their financial clout and lack of any worrisome competition, were able to succeed in the international markets in spite of not really having adequately solved their cross-culture predicament. However, they are well aware that they will have to become much more proficient in their cross-cultural competency as competition from the newly emerging industrial nations and third-world countries becomes more intense. Now, at least, they are beginning to recognize the problem and confront it.

The recent splurge of international joint ventures taking place in recent months provides a provocative model for cross-

cultural proficiency as well as a challenge for international corporations. This, both because of economic and cultural factors, is the most complex intercultural arrangement to manage and one in which all of the cross-cultural proficiency techniques and talents, as well as business skills at the disposal of both sides are most sorely tested. On the other hand, no other economic event offers such an array of cross-cultural interplay nor one that holds out more promise for a better and more just world through productive cultural synergy. As yet, this phenomenon has not been studied in depth, especially in regard to the cross-culture dynamics involved (Doyle, 11).

This paper is too limited to go into the many skills and techniques that were utilized by the MNCs in trying to increase cross-cultural proficiency. Some of this information is available (Harris and Moran 14). Many of the corporations initiated training programs both in the U.S. and in the host countries and hired consulting firms to operate them or started company-run ones to train their overseas managers. In the main, the results of these measures were disappointing. But they are in place and their training methods are being refined and improvement in more recent outcomes reflect it. What is significant however, at least from our perspective, is that few MNC sought help from higher education either from business schools or from foreign language departments. Even had they gone to them, and it is a sad commentary on the state of higher education that they were not able to offer any significant help, they would have found little relief from their dilemma. I

daresay that the great majority of business schools had not even the slightest inkling that cross-cultural proficiency was such a serious problem for the MNC, nor were they equipped to do anything about it had they realized it. They were fairly content in teaching the four P's, the significance of the alpha in investment analysis and other traditional concepts to their students, in the belief that they would be adequately prepared to take their place in the business world. Nor were foreign language departments, except in a few isolated cases, adequately integrated into the schools of business and economics. At least a part of the cross-cultural difficulties that the MNC were and are facing has to do with the lack of sufficient foreign language proficiency on the part of their personnel. As for cross-cultural competency with an international business focus, hardly any foreign language department had even remotely considered this aspect of foreign language learning. Indeed, one could safely say that foreign language departments had not the slightest idea of what was going on in the business school and even less of an idea what was going on in the business world, even though, as this paper suggests, it was of the utmost importance for them to be so informed. Let us not forget that at this same time foreign languages were still struggling with the problem of meaningfully integrating general culture into their curricula. Had the MNC sought help from them in the cultural area, unless they could have drawn a helpful analogy to their cross-cultural predicament from the fact that two Spanish speakers stand closer together than American ones when engaged in conversation or that Italians

have an extended family in relation to the American family, they would have received little meaningful help from them. As if all this were not bad enough, the social and behavioral sciences, and the departments of communication and anthropology, who also have a strong stake in cross-cultural competency and have done extensive research in this area, were in no practical or synchronized way involved with either the schools of business and economics or the foreign language departments (Bowley, 6). This series of suppositions seems to suggest a certain obsolescence in the American post-secondary infrastructure since there appears to be no viable interaction, in most universities, among the concerned academic disciplines mentioned. If this is a typical example of how higher education is tuned into the real world, then it could safely be said that if there are not some radical reforms implemented into the way higher education institutions are organized, they are not going to be able to respond adequately to the rapidly changing environment of the 1990's and beyond (17). Needless to say, most corporations looked to their own sources or hired consultants who, in the highest tradition of American entrepreneurship, saw the need for their services and were able to supply them. As one may by now suspect, these consultants, by far and large, came out of the social science fields and not from business school or foreign language specialists. One might be tempted to say, at this point, that American education might be better served if it were opened up to more market force competition of this type. This, of course, would be bitterly disputed by many of the educational

establishment. To be fair, however, some universities, still far too few, are providing workshops and conferences dedicated to cross-cultural proficiency in the international arena but, unfortunately, too few students are in attendance. Lamentably, we see here two great sectors of American life, on one hand the educational establishment which has such a great potential to help business and to become a real partner in the formation of a healthier economy and to establish a stronger competitive edge for business. On the other, we have the business establishment which is able to provide schools with a vivid model for the implementation of a more effective and relevant educational delivery system of cross-cultural proficiency approaches. The failure of either one of these groups to seriously engage in mutually beneficial dialogue is most unfortunate for American society since, to a large degree, our economic development and national security, as well as that of the rest of the world, depend on such interaction (Hoegl,15).

Special Problems for the United States

In many ways, the problems and inconsistencies already alluded to in this paper can be attributed to a deep strain of ethnocentrism that runs through the whole spectrum of American culture. It is not just that Americans decide to be incorrigible xenophobics out of plain stubbornness. The reasons for this ethnocentricity are deeply rooted in our national background and have been well documented by specialists in the social sciences.

Still, the American education system has not done nearly enough to attempt to reverse this tendency toward an excessive narrow view of our world. Needless to say, ethnocentricity is counterproductive to cross-cultural competence, especially in this day and age of internationalism and interdependence and we are paying a huge price for not seriously confronting it. One of the more overt displays of the systemic ethnocentrism that pervades American culture, and one that is particularly relevant to our topic and to the theme of this conference, are the recent campaigns whose prime objective is not only to establish English, by legal proclamation, as the official language of this country but, in addition, to implicitly discourage the use of any foreign language (Grant 12). At a gathering of foreign language and international business teachers, this might sound extremely ludicrous but "official language" propositions have been passed in 17 states in recent years which is an unhappy testimony to the fact that too many voters clearly do not understand the self-destructive effect that this type of legislation has on our national interests (Crawford, 10). Fear and resentment on the part of the majority language group are almost always the real motives of this movement but proponents of the legislation usually try to exacerbate the racial or ethnic biases of the status quo group which more often than not are strongly linked to the perceived economic consequences of failing to act, since fear and resentment are hardly legitimate reasons for implementing public policy. Nor should official English language initiatives be confused with the bilingual education polemic, which in our

context, is a separate but not totally unrelated question. The real aim of bilingual programs should be to produce a student who can function well in two languages in a variety of situations and unlike, "English only" policy, enhances rather than diminishes our cultural diversity. "The cultural pluralism of American society is one of its greatest assets, but such pluralism is a private matter of local choice and not a proper responsibility of the federal government. [The goal of Title VII is] to assist children of limited- or non-English speaking ability to gain competency in English so that they may enjoy equal educational opportunity-and not to require cultural pluralism." (Crawford, 10, p.24) Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, it has little to do with the counterproductive effects of the "English only" proponents. In fact, this whole question almost borders on the absurd if we consider that if America is to regain its predominant international leadership role, it must do it, not through military strength, but by successfully competing in the international marketplace. To do this, as many of the specialist in the field have been insisting, we need a pool of Americans who, in various fields are linguistically competent and who are also cross- culturally proficient and have a clear understanding of all of the ramifications of the persistent internationalization and its resultant interdependence that are taking place on our planet. Europeans, for example, have always been proficient in foreign languages and this multilingualism has allowed them to establish productive economic ties in various parts of the world, which otherwise would not have been as

accessible to them. One of the reasons why Japan has been able to outcompete us internationally is greatly due to their foreign language and cross-cultural competence, which in today's reality represent a real competitive edge. Against this kind of international backdrop, the farce of Americans passing laws that effectively limit the use and promulgation of other languages, can only be viewed as suicidal. It doesn't require a statute for people to know what the official language of the United States is and which language one needs to function successfully in national life. The fact that the framers of our constitution did not include a statement as to which should be the official language of the United States, represents, not, as many proclaim, an oversight, but may well have been a prophetic intuition. We do not need laws to proclaim the obvious and we do not need to place obstacles to the achievement of more linguistic competency. Myopic paranoia cannot be allowed to prevail at the economic expense of the country. Too much is at stake.

Foreign Languages and Ethnocentrism

An ideal place at which to start to breakdown our deeply-entrenched ethocentrism is precisely in the foreign language class, although each and every discipline should incorporate components which militate against a single, self-centered view of a highly multidimensional world. We choose the foreign language class, in particular, for a series of reasons. First, an ethnocentric mentality impedes the learning of another

language because it constantly substitutes the symbols of the target language for its own linguistic symbols and continues to perceive the new language more as a kind of Morse code rather than the life-blood of a culture with its own unique vision. An even more serious error is the assumption that the target language expresses and describes internal and external reality from a common moral and ethical base, that is that we all basically think alike and share universal values. An ethnocentric view also interprets foreign cultural phenomena as being either viable or inferior, or even weird or at best ambiguous based on one's own set of cultural guidelines. This tendency has to be altered and the sooner the better. Frequent reference in the classroom to international or even national business experience in dealing with ethnocentrism is especially effective since it gives the learner a real-life frame of reference to the fallacy and peril of one-world views. On the other hand, simply by having the instructor point out that ethnocentrism is counterproductive would make very little impression on changing a student's attitude. One such example that might be utilized is that of the American manager in an Hispanic country who was attempting to find the guilty party who had sabotaged a key piece of machinery and paralyzed the production process for a time. After interviewing several workers, including a young woman, he arrived at the conclusion that the young lady was guilty because while she was being interrogated, she avoided looking directly into his eyes, which in the American cultural context reflects guilt. Had he been

more cross-culturally competent he would have realized that in Hispanic cultures young women are discouraged from looking directly into a strange man's eye, especially an older man, since it suggests impropriety or may even have sexual overtones. Shortly afterwards, the man who committed the act was identified. Another example of cross-cultural misunderstanding is that a healthy belch at a business luncheon in public is considered to be in extremely bad taste in most American social circles. However, in the Arab world it is accepted and in some situations it might even pass as a kind of compliment. Or that in some Southeastern Asia cultures people shake their head from left to right when they wish to convey an affirmative response. It would be helpful for teachers to assemble a large repertoire of these real-life case histories because they tend to make the learner a little more distrustful of his narrow and secure interpretation of reality. This, of course, should be the constant goal of the teacher if they are true-believers in cross-cultural competency. Similar attributional errors are common in all cultural interaction, and examples of many of them are readily available in the literature and can be collected and referred to often (Brislin, 7).

Most language teachers try to include appropriate cultural components into their syllabus but they are often frustrated by a woeful lack of adequate materials. Even if they feel the material is useful, there is not adequate time in which to incorporate them into the linguistic and communicative components because of the restraints of the teaching schedule and the

priorities of the administration or even the priorities as perceived by the teachers themselves. An even larger concern is that if cross-cultural awareness and the desensitizing of ethnocentrism are of the highest order of priority, and they certainly should be, then the question becomes, since there are so many cultures out there about which we should be "aware", how can we cover them all if we are only teaching one or two foreign languages. For starters, we need a set of cultural materials that are accurate, relevant and can be arranged into logical units so that they can blend in naturally with the communicative and linguistic components. Unfortunately, these are not currently available. As stated earlier, we believe these can best be gleaned from the experiences of international corporations who have and are dealing with specific cultures every day. It is also essential that this set of cultural information be both cohesive and coherent and that its relation with the organic whole of which it forms a part be as clearly articulated as possible to the student. This can be best accomplished by relating business practices and behavior to other significant cultural phenomena. Since the teaching of a foreign language, in and by itself, is not strictly a global perspective activity, those techniques which are effective in making students culturally sensitive to the people who speak the target language can be converted into generic skills. These, in turn, can be equally effective in teaching students how to be culturally sensitive to any number of cultures and be aware of the interdependence that inescapably flows from the dynamics of

globalization, and at the same time emphasize that this phenomenon is taking place in every area of human endeavor. In this way, even the study of one foreign language could be truly an internationally oriented enterprise. Another way, by far the most generic and effective strategy, yet, perhaps the one most overlooked, is to demonstrate, in the most clear and decisive fashion, that the student's own values, attitudes, behavior patterns, customs, feelings, spatial and time concepts, ideas of good and bad and a whole host of other character and personality traits are directly or indirectly determined by their cultural experience. This can be the first real step toward liberating oneself from the restricting constraints of ethnocentrism.

Unfortunately, America's education is not sufficiently geared up to launch a concentrated curricular assault against what, today at least, may be our biggest threat: that of our inability to develop a globally competitive work force in both the technical and humanitarian sense. The dilemma facing us is that the very ethnocentrism at the heart of our culture makes all of our institutions, especially deep-structured ones like education, less sensitive to the inherent limitations of this myopic and distorted view of the world. For those interested in what constitutes some of the personal attributes of a cross-culturally sensitive individual they are directed to Paige (18).

Ethnocentrism and Ethnorelativism

Cross-cultural competency is not spontaneous to any particular culture, although some groups appear to have higher or lower degrees of receptivity. At any rate, the subjective experience of the student can be an enormous resource in breaking down ethnocentric barriers, both in the class-room experience as well as later in the international work-place. Needless to say, to tap this resource, the learner must adopt new attitudes and develop introspective skills and habits that lead to heightened self-awareness. The more one learns about oneself, the more one learns about others and conversely, the more one learns about others, the more one learns about oneself (Condon and Yousif,9). This circular learning pattern is one of the linch pins to more nearly achieve cross-cultural competence. There are a variety of ways to make learners aware of to what extent their cultural background operates on their psyche, and that the knowledge of this process may well be the crucial first step in increasing their cultural sensitivity. It may well be worth while to list at this point the stages of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity development as defined by Professor Milton J. Bennett, of Portland State University in Oregon (Bennett,3). He starts his first stage, as one might surmise, at the ultimate ethnocentric view, that is Denial. At this point, one's world view is central to all reality and is never challenged since the individual remains imbedded in his cultural cocoon and never strays outside of it. This is of course an extreme example of

ethnocentrism, but I am sure we have all seen examples of this overt parochialism which often masquerades as a kind of isolation ideology. Moving along his development line, from left to right, we encounter the next stage Defense, at which point we realize that there are differences but in order to protect our ego, since any affront to our ethnocentrism is almost always perceived as a threat to the centrality of our view of the world and of our self-image, these differences are perceived as reenforcing the superiority of our own culture. One should keep in mind that the process of diminishing our ethnocentrism is, for most people, an unsettling and traumatic experience. It usually takes the form of either denigrating the other culture or assuming one's own culture is at the pinnacle of the cultural hierarchy and therefore every other culture is inferior and denigrating it would be purely redundant. The next stage, according to Bennett, is Minimization, "the last-ditch attempt to preserve the centrality of one's own world view and involves an attempt to bury all differences under the weight of cultural similarities and that any difference is at best trivial". (3) At this stage, cultural differences at least are recognized and even tolerated to some degree. It represents the halfway point on a line between the two extremes of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. The next step is Acceptance. At this stage, cultural differences are both acknowledged and respected. Next, we have Adaptation in which the learner becomes in fact "bicultural" or "multicultural" and can quite easily shift into a Spanish world view, a Japanese one etc. The final step is Integration, which is the absolute

opposite of ethnocentrism and indicates a person who is completely ethnorelative, or as Bennett puts it: "a person who experiences differences as an essential and joyful aspect of life." (3, p.186) This person has all the requisites of an ethnorelative view: tolerance of ambiguity and differences, cultural self-awareness, non-judgmental, enthusiasm and commitment toward authentic intercultural communication, empathy, a sense of humility, sincerity and openness and the ability to make value-free attributions of what he perceives. In other words, the ideal global citizen and the zenith toward which all cross-cultural programs ought to be directed. Professor Bennett goes on to outline a series of strategies to move the learner along the various stages of this development sequence. The foreign language teachers, who I hope by this point can consider themselves cross-cultural trainers (18) and can decide how far along this path he should strive to take the student and how to integrate these stages into the linguistic and communicative components. International business would like their people, one would think, at least at the medium point or better and that might be a reasonable goal for the classroom situation also.

The Business World As a Model for Academia

Still another theme of this paper is about ways to spur on closer collaboration among foreign language departments, schools of business and economics, and the practitioners of international or intercultural businesses, departments of social and behavioral

sciences, communications or any other discipline or sector of our society interested, for whatever reason, to improve understanding among all peoples. Once again it should be pointed out that, in the main, our educational system is not geared up for the preparation of citizens who can function in the decade of the 90's and beyond. The educational establishment is apparently even less prepared to produce business school graduates who have appropriate language skills and are cross-culturally proficient. This, of course, is due partly to the ethnocentric strain alluded to earlier. For example, in Europe and Japan, our principal economic competitors, business school students are required to be fluent in at least one foreign language and to spend at least one year, and preferably two, in a country where the language is spoken. Compare that with the programs in the average business schools here in this country.

I believe it would be fair to say that the interaction between real world business and American business schools throughout the country is, at, best, uneven. Too many business schools have lost touch with their practitioners in the field, to the detriment of both. Too many business schools have failed to globalize their curricula and integrate foreign languages into their programs. Too many have failed to emphasize cross-cultural competency, either as a separate course, or as a component in other courses, particularly in those of marketing, management and labor relations. Too many business courses have failed to fully utilize the skills of their colleagues in the social and behavioral science fields, or of others. Solid courses in

general and business ethics are almost non-existent. Colleagues in philosophy or in religious studies could provide courses in this area, and concentrate on specific business applications. Most foreign language departments in our universities have been no more accommodating than the schools of business in preparing their students to operate in the global workplace. They still fill their curriculum with esoteric literature courses that leave no room for applied language courses in business skills or in other specialties. The complete indifference that language and business schools have shown each other is indeed most unfortunate, and our society is paying and will continue to pay a high price for their mutual disdain. Foreign language departments will have to become more aware of a rapidly changing world in which international trade and the MNC and a whole array of other economic forces are on the leading edge of an intense process of globalization and interdependence and that economic vigor and health drive all aspects of human development and make more possible the achievement of all other human aspirations. Therefore, the need to integrate their programs with those of the business schools seems absolutely vital and one could even go as far as to label this lack of meaningful integration a national emergency. Business schools have to shake off their lethargy and innovate their curricula so that it is more congruent with the changing requirements and strains of a more complex and competitive international environment. They, like their counterparts in the field, will have to reshape their programs and become "meaner and leaner" in order to be able to react

faster and more effectively to the rapid changes taking place in the economic and political environment.

It has been proposed that the connection between foreign languages and business is an intimate and vital one, both because of the paramount role of communication in today's world, and because a rapidly globalizing world requires large numbers of citizens who are truly cross-culturally sophisticated and able to communicate and negotiate and empathize with the multilingual and multicultural diversity in which they have to function. Certainly, the experiences of international business in dealing with a plethora of different cultures have to be converted into class-room materials and be incorporated into the syllabi to provide both truly effective and realistic materials. At the same time, by interacting with business schools, we can assure American businesses a steady supply of linguistically and culturally competent students who also have the skills and knowledge to carry out key technical assignments in their particular company or industry. That is, I am sure, the kind of graduate that industry wants, whether they are engaged internationally or not. Increasingly, larger foreign investment in our country of both capital and plant equipment, and the ever-growing presence of foreign managers, the immigration patterns of recent decades and the resultant huge ethnic markets, assure that our students, whether they expect to or not, will be moving into a multicultural workplace, where a good deal of their success and that of the country's, will depend on their cross-cultural and linguistic proficiency.

Need to Restructure the Educational System

It has been said more than once that to move a graveyard from one side of town to the other is easier than changing a college curriculum. Those of us who have participated in college governance would certainly not refute this observation. School curricula is part of the deep-structure of an educational system, and, as such, offers the most tenacious resistance to change. This may well be an effective mechanism to ward off capricious or passing fads conjured up by well-meaning academics or other education theorists. However, all institutions have to be modified or changed periodically since the implacable dynamics programmed into the human situation, sooner or later, render them less in touch with reality if not hopelessly obsolete. Unless there take place significant deep structural changes in American education, it seems highly unlikely that our schools will be able to produce the kind of linguistic competent and cross-culturally proficient graduates that a new global environment demands. However, the dynamics of an open democracy and free-market system will, given time, provide needs which a society considers essential. In fact, a free-market demands accountability and is implacable in its intolerance for inefficiency or incompetency and must eliminate them or cease to exist. Making public institutions more open to market forces is not unique in this country. School bus and cafeteria services are regularly contracted out to entrepreneurs who can perform them more

economically and efficiently than the schools can. The incarceration of prisoners in New Mexico is even now being handled more efficiently and economically by private organizations and we often hear critics of the U.S. Postal Service urge that mail service be contracted out to private firms. Many private enterprises are currently supplying instructional services to public schools and are doing it more efficiently and economically. It is not entirely inconceivable, therefore, that private enterprise will move into certain sectors of our educational system in order to provide new services or substitute those which are poorly delivered. Already, some larger corporations are moving in this direction, unhappy with the lack of reforms on the part of many business schools. In fact, some current critics of the educational establishment compare it to some of the unresponsive socialist institutions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that lack the ability for innovation and adequate production because of the absence of competitive market forces (Chubb and Poe, 8). But where the most vital need for some kind of radical change exists, is in the teaching of foreign languages. From our perspective, and I know there are many highly motivated language teachers who get defensive when this fact is suggested, the teaching and learning of foreign languages, in spite of the vast improvements in the last 3 decades or so, is, in the main, far less than ideal. We just do not know how to produce really proficient students in foreign languages nor know how to create an appropriate environment and sequence in which linguistic and cross-cultural

proficiency is both encouraged and achieved. Nor do we know how to modify our national ethnocentric mentality so as to create a more responsive setting in which the teaching and learning of foreign languages would be more productive. We seem to do everything possible in order to frustrate the success of our foreign language programs.

Might it not be feasible for a private enterprise to move into the field of foreign language learning and provide a new program and sequence that could serve as some kind of a beacon for our traditional institutions to follow? Of course one can mention Berlitz (2) and other similar organizations who are providing a commercial foreign language service, but the language problem in our country is so pervasive and deep-seated that these firms represent a drop in the bucket in comparison with the radical solutions that are so desperately needed. Would it not be helpful to look to the European experience for some kind of guidance in making a radical turn-around of our language predicament? The European Community, or Common Market, is about to embark upon the most gigantic and far-reaching political and economic synergy ever attempted in human history. Twelve independent and sovereign nations with 9 official languages, will join together in what now appears will be both an economic and political united states of Europe, creating a single market of almost 350 million people, (if we include East Germany, which could become a member as early as next year if the two Germanys are reunited.) This will make the Community the largest single market in the world. In preparing for this union, which will

take place in 1992, the Community has instituted 9 schools, each one ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, to serve the children of European Community employees. Although this may not be the best analogy for our purposes, it may offer us some indication as to the magnitude of the problem. In their system, usually by the first grade, the student begins a second language, which is called the "working language". This must be English, French or German. A third Community language is introduced in the 7th grade, which might correspond to what we call the beginning of our language sequence, although in our country it usually begins much later. By the time students reach the 11th grade, they are taking history, geography, economics, advanced math, music, art and gym in the "working language." By the way, the only thing that they then take in their mother tongue is the study of language itself and perhaps science and philosophy. By the time they graduate, these polyglot students are ready for the university where they will continue with both their working and second language (Mapes, 16). After graduation, they will be disseminated throughout European government or industry and will indeed be tough competitors of ours in the new international, multi-cultural and multi-lingual world of the next century. If we ever do approximate this kind of a program, and sooner or later we will have to, at least for a significant segment of our school population, it will come about, I feel, more from the kind of market forces we are talking about rather than from public consensus or from the instigations of the educational establishment. One feature of this "Euroschool" that could be

immediately adapted to our system is to introduce more applied language courses into the foreign language and business school curriculum, a sort of mini-immersion technique. Various business courses, or any others for that matter, could be taught in the target language. There are such courses in place and teachers find that language proficiency significantly increases when the target language is not the major focus but simply the medium to the learning of another discipline or set of skills. What seems crystal clear is that the way in which we deliver our foreign language product and the way it is integrated into the business school must be radically altered if we are going to be able to produce the kind of linguistically and culturally competent graduates that are so sorely needed in today's world. Lets all hope that the solution, whatever form it takes, comes soon. Effective intercultural fluency, so vital to national and international security and commerce and to the formation of an informed and productive citizenry able to function effectively in multi-faceted environments, has to become one of our major national priorities.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural competency is a rather recent movement which has a variety of important applications for foreign language teaching, schools of business and economics and firms engaged in either international or national commerce. This oversight is due principally to the rather strong strain of ethnocentrism that is

deeply engrained in the national psyche. Up until now, it has not been adequately addressed, to any significant degree, with the possible exception of certain international business practitioners. For them, it represents a threat to their bottom line, and unlike foreign language departments and schools of business and economics, they have to immediately confront and resolve it as best they can or their very survival is threatened.

Since culture and language are so inextricably intertwined and the total culture is too vast to manage in any pedagogical sense, the direct engagement of business with cross-cultural challenges can supply foreign language programs with a cohesive package of essential and reliable cultural materials. These, in turn, can be more easily integrated into the communicative and linguistic components of the syllabi. On the other hand, the schools of business and economics can utilize this cultural package to more adequately prepare their graduates for the cross-cultural encounters that they will surely face when they enter into the business world. They can also be incorporated into a course that exclusively deals with the topic, or be integrated into the various courses of their program, such as, among others, marketing, management and labor relations.

Closer cooperation between foreign language departments and schools of business and economics must receive the highest priority if we are to produce students who can operate comfortably in culturally diverse markets. As a matter of fact, our whole educational system has to be restructured so that it can react more quickly and appropriately to an ever changing and

shifting environment in which competition is increasingly more intense. Market forces, if not public consensus, in the long run will force this to happen as the United States struggles to function successfully in a new world-order.

Cross-cultural competency will not only offer us greater potential in dealing more effectively, both at the pragmatic and altruistic levels, with other macro-cultures, but aid us in understanding and interacting more productively and humanely with sub-cultures within our own borders. This would truly be a significant step forward, since few things have diminished the greatness of our society and national character and compromised are integrity as a world leader than the inability of the status quo larger culture to deal with its ethnic and racial minorities.

Cross-cultural competency has, of course, both purely pragmatic as well as humanistic consequences. The globalization of world economic systems is driving historical evolution to form a new, and hopefully brighter, world in which the threat of major military aggression will be greatly diminished if not entirely eliminated. This will come about as increasing regional economic alliances, the single European market for example, will make them aware of the counterproductive nature that armed conflict plays in the attainment of their self interests or, at least, be aware that the potential benefits that any military adventurism might accrue, would be, by far, outweighed by the negative consequences of aggression. Furthermore, the opportunity costs of increased military expenditures will increase exponentially in the coming decades, to the point of becoming economically intolerable,

thereby further delegating military solutions to the category of non-viable options. In this kind of environment, the notion of our common humanity and that of solidarity and fraternity can transcend the superficial differences of our cultural diversity. Then, a kinder and gentler world, not conceived as a political slogan, but as a viable reality brought about by a world population of citizens of good-will and committed to human justice for all. Teachers and practitioners of business and economics and those involved in the teaching of foreign languages and cross-cultural competency can be newly inspired and motivated by their participation in such a lofty and noble human enterprise.

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